

Message Text

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SUBJ: PROSPECTS FOR YASUKUNI SHRINE BILL

REFS: (A) TOKYO 6198

(B) TOKYO 7256

SUMMARY: YASUKUNI SHRINE BILL FAILED TO PASS RECENT DIET SESSION.
IN VIEW OF STRONG OPPOSITION FUTURE HANDLING OF ISSUE BY GOJ
EXPECTED TO BE CAUTIOUS. END SUMMARY.

1. DIET ADJOURNED JUNE 3 WITHOUT UPPER HOUSE TAKING VOTE TO
COMPLETE ENACTMENT OF CONTROVERSIAL YASUKUNI SHRINE BILL
PASSED BY LOWER HOUSE MAY 25. LAST MINUTE NEGOTIATIONS ALSO FAILED
TO SECURE QTE CONTINUING DELIBERATION UNQTE STATUS FOR BILL, WHICH
WOULD HAVE KEPT IT ALIVE IN UPPER HOUSE THROUGH NEXT SESSION. BILL
THUS FAILED OF ENACTMENT FIFTH TIME SINCE FIRST INTRODUCED IN
1969, AND IS DEAD UNTIL SUCH TIME AS IT MAY BE INTRODUCED AS NEW BILL
IN FUTURE SESSION OF DIET.

2. PROPONENTS OF BILL ARE CERTAIN TO CONTINUE TO PRESS FOR
INTRODUCTION AGAIN AT EARLIEST OPPORTUNITY, BUT PROSPECTS FOR
ENACTMENT APPEAR TO BE QUITE SLIM IN VIEW OF DETERMINED RESISTANCE
TO IT BY OPPOSITION PARTIES EFFECTIVELY SUPPORTED BY BROAD
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RANGE OF RELIGIOUS GROUPS, INCLUDING BUDDHIST AND CHRISTIANS.

POTENTIAL OF ISSUE LIKE YASUKUNI TO PARALYZE DIET PROCEEDINGS
SHOULD LDP ATTEMPT TO RAILROAD BILL THROUGH LEGISLATIVE PROCESS
WAS AMPLY DEMONSTRATED IN DIET SESSION JUST CONCLUDED.

3. VIEWED IN PERSPECTIVE, PASSAGE OF YASUKUNI SHRINE BILL
IN ITSELF DOES NOT APPEAR TO BE PRIORITY LDP POLITICAL GOAL
OR TRUE NATIONAL ISSUE. CONTINUING EMOTIONAL APPEALS BY AGING
WAR-DEAD SURVIVORS AND VETERANS GROUPS HAVE FAILED TO ATTRACT
KIND OF BROAD PUBLIC SUPPORT REQUIRED FOR LDP/GOJ TO ESTABLISH
CHANGE IN YASUKUNI SHRINE STATUS AS MAJOR POLICY
OBJECTIVE. NEVERTHELESS, LDP ELECTION STRATEGY DOES REQUIRE
CONVINCING SHOW OF CONCERN FOR INTERESTS OF BEREAVED FAMILIES,
WHO REPRESENT RELATIVELY SMALL BUT IMPORTANT ELEMENT IN PARTY'S
CONSTITUENCY NATIONWIDE. RECENT LOWER HOUSE ACTION OF BILL MAY BE
SEEN AS REPRESENTING LDP EFFORT TO DEMONSTRATE ITS CONCERN. AS
FURTHER CONCESSION TO SURVIVORS, VAGUE PLEDGE TO ESTABLISH SYSTEM
TO HONOR AND PROTECT SPIRITS OF THOSE WHO GAVE LIVES IN SERVICE
OF NATION HAS BEEN INCLUDED IN LDP/UPPER HOUSE CAMPAIGN PLATFORM.

4. LDP DECISION TO PUSH FOR LOWER HOUSE VOTE ON YASUKUNI
BILL IN RECENT DIET SESSION ALSO APPEARS TO HAVE BEEN BASED ON
NEED TO ASSUAGE FEELINGS OF RIGHT-WING LDP MEMBERS
(INCLUDING SEIRANKAI) RUFFLED BY RATIFICATION OF PRC CIVIL AIR
PACT. IN ADDITION, LDP MAY ALSO HAVE CALCULATED THAT
OPPOSITION PARTIES' PREDICTABLE REFLEX ACTION AGAINST BILL WOULD
DRAMATICALLY UNDERSCORE LDP'S UPPER HOUSE ELECTION CAMPAIGN
THEME THAT CONSERVATIVE VICTORY NECESSARY TO PROTECT AGAINST
ALIEN IDEOLOGIES ESPOUSED BY MARXIST OPPOSITION.

5. IN FUTURE HANDLING OF THIS QUESTION, LDP/GOJ MUST
WEIGH RISK OF HALTING DIET ACTION ON ENTIRE LEGISLATIVE PROGRAM
WHenever IT TRIES TO PUSH ENACTMENT OF YASUKUNI SHRINE BILL AGAINST
POLITICAL NEED TO RESPOND TO PRESSURES FROM BILL'S SUPPORTERS.
UNDER FORESEEABLE CIRCUMSTANCES WE BELIEVE THAT LDP/GOJ WILL
CONTINUE TO AVOID TAKING DECISIVE ACTION TO ENACT PALPABLY
DIVISIVE LAW, AND WILL CONTINUE TO TAKE LIMITED TACTICAL STEPS
DESIGNED TO SATISFY BILL'S PROPONENTS WITHOUT JEOPARDIZING MORE
IMPORTANT LEGISLATIVE GOALS.
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